197 North-East Caucasian (continued)

Samur Group
*Lezgian
Agul
Rutul
Tsakhur
*Tabasaran
Budukh
Dzhek

Khinalug

Udi

B. Structure of the Languages

194 A phonetic characteristic common to all the Caucasian languages is their richness in consonants. Georgian has 28 consonant phonemes, Avar has 44, the literary dialect of Abkhaz has 67 (cf. English with 23). The vowel systems, on the other hand, are simple and vowels rarely exceed 5. In addition to voiceless and voiced consonants, all the languages also have a series of glottalic consonants, pronounced with a "glottal catch." Speakers of Georgian identify the Russian voiceless consonants with their own glottalic ones (rather than with their own voiceless consonants, which, unlike the Russian, are aspirated), and this "glottalic" pronunciation

194 is the main characteristic of the Georgian's accent when speaking Russian. As further phonetic characteristics must be mentioned the ubiquitous presence of two series of k-sounds (one velar, as in English, and one unvular) with fricatives corresponding to one or both (as in German ich and ach). Some of the N. Caucasian languages (Circassian, Avar, etc.) have various types of lateral fricatives (cf. the Welsh ll); their richness in consonants is further due to the occurrence of series of emphatic, palatalized and labialized consonants in addition to the neutral ones.

193 In morphology and syntax, the three groups of Caucasian languages show considerable divergences. The N.E. languages have a rich declension (e.g., Avar has 19 cases, and Lak has as many as 40) and a simple conjugation (in most of them the very does not express person). The N.W. languages, on the other hand, have the exact opposite: their declension is poor (Circassian has 4 cases and Abkhaz, 3) but their conjugation is extremely complicated, the verb expressing the person of subject, direct and indirect object and even prepositional object ("with you," "for me," etc.). In this respect the S. Caucasian languages are in an intermediate position, nominal and verbal inflection being neither as complex nor as simple as the extremes found in the North. In most of the N.E.

8: Lužbetak E-4 (no date) 1951 RHl Caucasia RHl

141 brachycephalic remains testify. In other words, from these finds it is evident
174 that crossing was not uncommon already during the Bronze Age.[12] Very important racially was the contact with the Cimmerians and Scythian-Sarmatian populations, who for centuries lived in the Caucasus, till in the fourth century B. C. they were driven southward to Subartu.[13] Some present-day Ossetine-speaking tribes are not of Indo-European origin while practically all have a strong non-Indo-European strain.[14]

141 According to C. S. Coon, "The Caucasic-speaking peoples as a whole,
144 from an anthropometric standpoint, represent a blend between a local Alpine racial nucleus and several kinds of Mediterraneans. The Georgians and the Lesghians are the most Alpine, the Cherkesses the least so. The facial dimensions preclude, in most groups, the presence of a long-faced Irano-Afgan element in any quantity; except among the Cherkesses, the head size, with mean lengths in the low 180's, limits the possible Mediterranean elements to the smaller-headed varieties. These are apparently both Danubian and Cappodocian; there is too much true facial Dinaricism for the Danubian to be the only factor, and too much blondism and nasal concavity for the Cappadocian."[15]

§ 3. LINGUISTICS

197 Perhaps nowhere in the world will one find such an intricate mosaic of languages as in the Caucasus. Today there are about 40 different Caucasian languages, and formerly the number must have been much greater. Strabo (VI. 1—16) speaks of seventy languages along the coast of the Black Sea and 26 in Albania, that is, in Azerbaijan- and Armenian-speaking countries of today. Pliny speaks of 300 different languages at Dioscurias which necessitated 80 interpreters. Abulfeda calls the Caucasus "The Mountain of Tongues" and Thomas Artsruni, the Armenian historian of the tenth century, writes that "72 different nations inhabit the Caucasus."

These languages fall into three sharply distinct groups: the Northwestern, the Northeastern, and the Southern. (See pp. 1—4.)

1. Phonetics

194 The vowel system of all three groups, but especially of the Northwestern group, is very poorly developed. In Abkhazian there are only two basic vowels *a* and *ə*.[16] The preponderance of consonants over vowels is less marked in the Northeastern languages: the Chechen, Avaro-Andi, and Lak languages have the five *a, e, i, o, u,* vowels, and some languages, for example Kurin and Aghulian, have the equivalent of something between the German umlauts *ä, ö, ü,* and *a, o, u*.[17] The vowel system of the Southern group is the richest of the three.

[12] R. Bleichsteiner, "Kaukasische Völker," *Ebert's Reallexikon*, VI, p. 250.
[13] R. Bleichsteiner, "Die Völker des Kaukasus," *Asien-Berichte*, V (1944), No. 22, p. 4.
[14] A. Baschmakoff, *op. cit.*, p. 32. See his analysis of the racial problem, *op. cit.*, pp. 28—38.
[15] C. S. Coon, *op. cit.*, pp. 631 f.
[16] R. Bleichsteiner, "Die kaukasische Sprachgruppe," *Anthropos*, XXXII (1937), p. 63. Dirr assigns four basic vowels to Abkhazian. *Einführung in das Studium der kaukasischen Sprachen*, p. 29.

Diphthongs occur very seldom in the Caucasian languages, the strongest tendency to form such being in Chechen.

On the other hand, the poverty of the vocalic system is amply compensated for by the richness of the consonantal systems of the three groups, a fact especially true in regard to the languages belonging to the Northwestern branch. The Abkhazian language, which, as we have seen, has only two basic vowels, has as many as 70 different consonants.

The aspirated tenues *p' t' k'* occur in all three branches. Similarly, in all three groups we find glottocclusive tenues and affricates *p' t' k'* (*ts'*) *č'*. Lateral consonants (l°, t°, t', k°) are represented in all three groups: in the Northwestern by the Ubykhian and Kabardian languages, in the Northeastern by the Avaro-Andi sub-group, and in the Southern by the Tushian language. There are, besides these, many other interesting and unusual consonants. To mention but a few, we find in the Caucasian languages, for example, the so-called Polish l or English *w*; then, there are interesting palatals, dorsals, labialized *ź* (something between *ž* and z, or less correctly what Dirr terms the "whistling sound" of *žzv*), reduced consonants, emphatic consonants. These are but a few examples showing the richness of the consonantal system of the Caucasic languages.[18]

2. The Class System

Words are divided not so much according to gender as to class, a phenomenon found in all three linguistic groups. In the Northwestern group we find the classes in Abkhazian, not however in Ubykhian or in Kabardian. The Abkhaz distinguish between rational and non-rational beings. The class system is most fully developed in the Northeastern group. Generally speaking, one class includes all rational beings male and female after puberty; whereas, one to four classes generally embrace all other beings. The language of the Bats (Chechen tribe in Tusheția)[19] and the Ingushi distinguish six classes; the Dargwa, Andi, Lak, Rutulian, Archi, Tsakhur languages have four classes in all; the Avaro-Andi sub-group has three; Tabassaranians distinguish between persons and things, while the Kurins, Aghulians and Udins no longer have the class system. In South Caucasia the system is either non-existent or is still in its initial stage of development.[20]

3. Numerals

The numerals of all Caucasic languages are based on the vigesimal system.[21]

4. Verbs

The Caucasian languages are distinguished for their extremely complicated verbal forms. In the Northwestern languages complete phrases and subordinate

[17] A. Dirr, *l. c.*
[18] A. Dirr, *op. cit.*, pp. 29—34. See also N. Trubetzkoj, "Die Konsonantensysteme der ostkaukasischen Sprachen," *Caucasica*, VIII.
[19] Dirr, less correctly, says eight classes are distinguishable in Bats.
[20] A. Dirr, *op. cit.*, pp. 342 f.
[21] A. Dirr, *op. cit.*, pp. 358—361.